



Speaking Points: Transgender People in Sports

Wisconsin Assembly Bill 196 was introduced by Republicans on March 2, targeting transgender girls and seeking to ban them from girls' sports through all the K-12 levels.

Representative Barbara Dittrich, R-Oconomowoc, **introduced this harmful legislation in a public spectacle that sought to call out, humiliate, and harm one small group of girls – transgender girls** – and through false rhetoric and dis-information. Those behind this event demonstrated their true intent was not to protect anyone but rather harm a specific, small group of vulnerable children for political gain.

The reality is trans kids in sports puts no one at risk. Trans girls competing in sports as the gender they identify hurts no one. The only girls losing opportunities to participate, titles, records, or scholarships are trans children themselves, who are already an extremely vulnerable student population subject to bullying and harassment. As a result of this further bullying by adult State legislators, trans kids are at a dangerous level of risk very real harm, including being further isolated and intimidated and physically and emotionally harmed.

Transgender children are forced to navigate an already hostile environment that directly results in high levels of anxiety, depression, and even suicide. Trans children attempt suicide at rates 10 to almost 20 times that of their peers. That makes this further unnecessary and unwarranted harassment of these kids extremely reckless and immoral behavior on the part of adult Republican legislators.

Even people who deny they are transphobic and claim to support trans people will often take issue when a trans girl wants to compete with other girls. This is bigotry masked as caring about fairness. Trans women and girls must be seen for who they really are – women and girls, not men and boys. Biological sex is not as simple as people so often make it out to be based on their own uniformed experiences. If one wants to differentiate between trans and cis women, state "trans and cis women." If you want to talk about people with higher testosterone levels, recognize the truth that people of any gender may have higher testosterone levels.

A corresponding bill in the Wisconsin State Senate (Senate Bill 322) was introduced April 22.

Let's recognize this for what it is – dirty politics. GOP lawmakers record 250+ anti-trans bills is a coordinated effort to use vulnerable children as a wedge issue ahead of 2022 elections. Sixty-six of those bills seek to prevent trans students from playing on their school's sports team in alignment with their gender identity.

GOP leaders admit these discriminatory bills are designed to get conservatives into voting booths. When robotic text messages were sent to Pennsylvania voters claiming Joe Biden supports "dangerous and irreversible" treatments for trans minors, one right-wing lobby group spoke up claiming trans healthcare access is a "powerful issue that the Republican Party can use to its success."

Transgender INCLUSIVE policies have been in place in the NCAA and the Olympics for years.

Lawmakers' suggestion that student-athlete are trying to game the system for competitive advantage is

southwest wisconsin
Rainbow Alliance

nonsensical and completely unrealistic. And, it simply does not happen. There are no lawmaker's who can even point to one child or one example of this being a problem at any level in their districts.

As an oppressed population, **trans children have far fewer opportunities to participate in activities.** They simply don't have the same advantages to develop and practice and participate that their cisgender counterparts do, and they therefore are at a severe disadvantage in any competitive event. Suggesting otherwise is an egregious irresponsibility, and the lies and the language Republican lawmaker's are using to attack these children is reprehensible.

Republicans around the country are coordinating an all out attack on trans children, pushing bills that would force trans girls to compete on boys' teams. This bill isn't about boys playing girls' sports. It's about banning some girls – those who are transgender – from playing girls' sports. Fact is, there is no scientific evidence for excluding these children from participating.

Nearly all female athletes are cisgender, as are nearly all winners in these sports. There simply is NO epidemic of transgender girls dominating female sports. None. It's not happening. Attempts to force trans girls to play on boys' teams are unconscionable assaults on already marginalized transgender children, not to mention, the bills are not addressing a problem that actually exists.

Policies permitting transgender athletes to participate on teams matching their gender identity are not new. The Olympics has had trans-inclusive policies since 2004. Still, not one single openly transgender athlete has yet to even qualify for competition. In other states that explicitly allow trans youth to compete on the team matching their gender identity, no issues have been cited.

Excluding trans girls to "protect girls sports" would necessarily include a method of verifying if someone is trans. This is usually done through genital exams, hormone evaluation, or genetic testing. Most GOP bills simply propose accusation-based testing, meaning someone is tested when they are accused of being trans. This demonizes and weaponizes children's trans-ness. Not only is this incredibly invasive but also degrading to ALL women. Gender verification would create a systematically hostile environment for any woman or girl who looked "too masculine" while also systematically policing women's bodies. That's not to mention sex, genitals, and hormone level indicators are not all that simple. On a medical and genetic level, there is tremendous grey area among sexes the vast majority of the American public is unaware of.

The notion that transgender girls have an advantage in sports comes from the idea that testosterone produces greater muscle mass and other physical changes that result in superior athletic performances. That argument is problematic for several reasons. However, **trans girls are not the only girls with high testosterone levels.** About 10 percent of all women have elevated testosterone levels due to a condition known as polycystic ovarian syndrome, and none of those athletes are banned from women's or girls' sports. Additionally, transgender girls are often taking puberty blockers which result in very low testosterone levels. Nevertheless, this outrageously harmful bill would force trans girls to play with boys. If that weren't enough truly factual information, the athletic advantages of testosterone is not scientifically proven. In other words, the bills' proponents are simply turning their backs on science.

southwest wisconsin
Rainbow Alliance

Declaring trans girls have advantages over others in any way is also a blatant assault on reality. These children suffer from far higher rates of anxiety and bullying and depression and family strife, all of which make training and competing more difficult. They also experience homelessness and poverty due simply to who they are. It's truly no wonder we see so few trans athletes in college sports and beyond.

Our highly privileged legislators would do well to work half as hard on real issues instead of ones they invent for political gain. Girls in sports and every other activity suffer from the devaluation of their efforts, their successes, and their very lives. They receive far less media attention, and in professional sports they receive far less pay. Instead of manufacturing a problem and hurting children for political gain – children who really need our protection – Republican legislators should be doing something about real problems.

Trans youth and the larger trans community could really use a wave of love and support right now. Not just for their own emotional support. They also need it in public view. The public needs and deserves to see these outrageous lies by GOP politicians countered by reasonable and caring voices. As others from our Governor on down are considering their own reactions, they are looking at public reaction and the social and political environment that either supports or seeks to harm trans people. We all bear a duty to let trans kids everywhere, whether they play sports or not, know they are loved and supported.